

Device at Hill Hearing: 'Bug' or News Transmitter?

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A "sophisticated transmitter" has been found in the main hearing room of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

The device, not quite the size of a cigarette pack, may have been intended as a "bug." Or it may simply be a pocket transmitter that a broadcaster left behind.

The device was discovered Monday morning lying on a table used by the press when covering committee hearings. It was first thought to be a "bellboy" paging device brought into the room by someone accompanying Secretary of State William P. Rogers, who testified before the committee on Thursday, Feb. 8. Later it was discovered to be a "sophisticated transmitter with self-contained microphones and batteries" and was turned over to the F.B.I. for investigation.

Committee sources say the device was attached to the underside of the table and was jostled loose by a member of the cleaning crew who then picked it up and placed it on top of the table where a staff member found it.

Rep. H. R. Gross (R-Iowa), a member of the committee, said he had been informed the device was taped underneath the table. Other committee

sources say it was strapped beneath the table. FBI sources would say only that no tape marks were found on the device.

An FBI spokesman refused to say whether the device was a bug, saying only that the bureau "had reached no final conclusion on that." The spokesman did acknowledge that the matter was under investigation as a possible violation of the Interception of Communications Act, the same law under which seven men were charged with planting bugging devices at the Democratic National Committee's Watergate headquarters last June.

Committee sources said that no closed hearings were scheduled in the next few weeks except for a Feb. 20 organizational meeting. The last closed hearing was on Oct. 12 when a Spokane, Wash., exposition was discussed.

Other than Secretary Rogers' testimony in open hearings last Thursday on the Vietnam peace agreement, the hearing room was used briefly last Wednesday night by some committee members and King Hussein of Jordan.

King Hussein was attending a reception across the hall and then went into the room with his security men and some members of the committee. The members and the king sat

around a table and chatted informally for a few minutes, a committee source said.

He did not know whether the conversation was of a sensitive nature.

An authority in the technical aspects of broadcasting said yesterday the device, as described by chairman Morgan, sounds like one often used by television crews and reporters.

He said such a transmitter might be used to supply audio input to film cameras, or by reporters "roving up and down a football field or walking down a hall conducting a moving interview."

Attached beneath the table, "it would only pick up a jumble of voices," he said, while suggesting it might have been intended to "eavesdrop when the room was not so full."

Committee Chairman Thomas E. Morgan (D-Pa.) described the device as a rectangular metal box about 4 by 3 by 1/2 inches.

Because it was first thought to be a State Department paging device, Morgan said, "its discovery was called to the attention of the Congressional Relations Office" of the department. Later in the day the security people who had accompanied Rogers to the hearing were also informed.